

KILL THEM ALL

The Htan Shauk Khan massacre and sexual violence
by the Arakan Army in Buthidaung township



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Htan Shauk Khan village highlighted on Maungdaw and Sittwe Districts map, Sheet No. 2092 09, produced by the Survey Department, Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation, Union of Myanmar, 2004 (Scale 1:50,000)



Summary

This report provides evidence that the Arakan Army (AA) deliberately massacred hundreds of Rohingya residents of Htan Shauk Khan village (“Hoyya Siri” in Rohingya) in central Buthidaung township, northern Rakhine State, on May 2nd, 2024. Evidence is also provided that AA troops raped and killed women fleeing from Htan Shauk Khan, raped women returning to the village, and kept women as sex slaves in a nearby military base.

The report is based on interviews with nineteen Rohingya refugees from Buthidaung: eleven men and seven women. Eight were from Htan Shauk Khan village, two of whom lost over 60 relatives in the massacre on May 2nd. The interviews were carried out by Razia Sultana, a lawyer and human rights activist of Rohingya origin.

Villagers described how early in the morning of May 2nd, a large group of Myanmar Army troops appeared from the north, half of whom entered Htan Shauk village and half of whom entered the military junta’s Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 551 base east of the village. They warned villagers to leave their homes as fighting would break out. Hundreds of villagers began fleeing north out of the village.

Soon afterwards, hundreds of AA troops entered the village and also ordered villagers out of their homes. Villagers fled in different directions. One large group was blocked by AA troops at the main road east of the village, who persuaded the villagers to hand over two armed Myanmar Army soldiers among them.

This group of villagers were ordered to sit down in rows, with their heads bowed. They then heard an order given over a walkie-talkie used by an AA soldier: “Ah-lone that pit laik!” (Kill them all!). After that, the AA troops opened fire on the

villagers seated in front of them.

A 19-year-old villager saw his mother, father and five younger siblings being shot in front of him. He was only able to survive by covering himself with his mother's bloody scarf and pretending to be dead when AA troops searched through the bodies and shot those still alive.

Meanwhile, hundreds of villagers heading north were blocked by AA troops on the road, and were similarly shot at by AA troops. Villagers fleeing across paddy fields west of the village were also chased and shot at by AA troops. They saw most of the houses in Htan Shauk Khan being set alight as they fled.

Some young women were caught by AA troops, dragged into tall grass and raped, then killed. The body of one woman was later found half naked with a knife wound from her crotch to her stomach. The beheaded bodies of her two young children were beside her.

Villagers also revealed that twelve young women trying to flee were detained by AA troops, and kept as sex slaves in the LIB 551 camp seized from the junta. Four have since died. Most of the villagers able to escape fled to U Hla Pe village, two kilometers west of Htan Shauk Khan. There they were detained by AA, their mobile phones checked and seized, and young men who had formerly been recruited as soldiers by the junta were taken away and never seen again.

Two days after the May 2nd massacre, a farmer was ordered by AA with fifty other villagers from U Hla Pe to return to Htan Shauk Khan and gather hay to burn the bodies. He described seeing four piles of bodies, under tarpaulin, on the northeast edge of the village. He said the stench of the bodies was overpowering.

Other villagers who sneaked back to the village at night in the

weeks after the massacre. said they saw other bodies around the village, including one pile behind a mosque, and many in a pond south of the village.

Refugees fleeing to Bangladesh all had to obtain written permission from AA to travel out of Buthidaung. A religious teacher had to pay 275,000 Bangladesh taka (about 2,250 US dollars) for permission for his family to leave. He was also forced by the AA to hand over all his personal documents before leaving, including his household list and his land tax payment form – in other words, all concrete records of links to his home in Buthidaung.

Despite the AA's claims to media that the bodies found in Htan Shauk Khan were only those of Myanmar Army soldiers, evidence in this report shows that hundreds of Rohingya civilians were massacred by AA troops with direct orders from their superiors. Evidence also shows that AA troops have carried out systematic sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls.

The AA must take responsibility for the crimes committed by its troops.

Commanders and fighters involved in killings, rape, and arbitrary detention must be held to account.

All Rohingya civilians detained must be released, sexual slavery must end, and communities must be protected from further harm.

If the AA truly claims to stand for justice, it must prove it by enforcing accountability within its ranks and allowing independent monitoring to prevent future crimes.

Events preceding the massacre

In the early months of 2024, the Arakan Army was making steady gains in northern and southern Buthidaung township, and was closing in on the main Myanmar Army bases in central Buthidaung, including the LIB 551 base next to Htan Shauk Khan village, about five kilometers southeast of Buthidaung town.

Htan Shauk Khan (called “Hoyya Siri” in Rohingya) is a farming village formerly entirely populated by Rohingya. It is divided into two sections 250 meters apart: the smaller northern section contained about 25 houses, and the southern section about 200 houses.

In mid-April 2024, the Myanmar Army forcibly recruited 100 male villagers from Htan Shauk Khan to be trained as local militia to fight the AA. They were trained inside the LIB 551 base during the day, and allowed to return to their homes at night. Five Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) members, who stayed in the LIB 551 base, helped the Myanmar Army recruit the villagers and give the training, which was mainly about rifle use.

During the training, the recruits could be seen patrolling around the village with Myanmar Army soldiers.

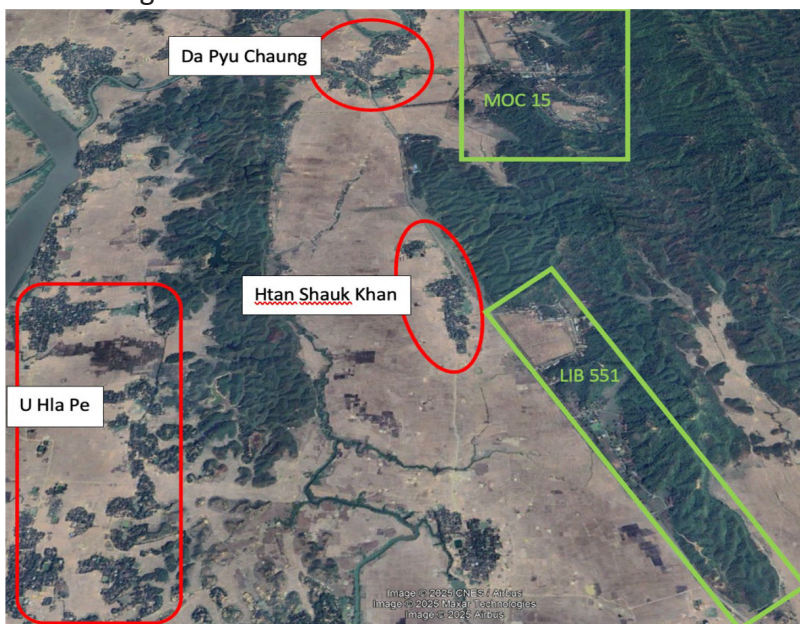
During April, due to spreading fighting, thousands of residents of villages east of Buthidaung (including Rongia Daung, Maung Nar Para and Kun Taing) fled to take refuge in Htan Shauk Khan and Da Pyu Chaung village (two kilometers north of Htan Shauk Khan), believing they would be safer from AA attack, due to the proximity of Htan Shauk Khan to the LIB 551 base and of Da Pyu Chaung to the junta’s Military Operations Command (MOC) 15 base.

In the fourth week of April, as fighting intensified close to

MOC 15, the AA ordered all residents of Da Pyu Chaung to relocate to U Hla Pe village, three kilometers southwest of Da Pyu Chaung. They said this was to protect the villagers from Myanmar Army airstrikes.

Around this time, the commander of LIB 551, Captain Kyaw Min Htun, was summoned by the commander of MOC 15. After the meeting, he left MOC 15, but near a bridge next to Da Pyu Chaung village, he was shot dead, together with two Rohingya recruits escorting him.

On May 1st, Myanmar Army troops from LIB 551 suddenly came to Htan Shauk Khan and collected all the weapons that had been provided to the Rohingya recruits in the village. At this time, there were less than 100 Myanmar Army troops staying in LIB 551. Several hundred troops who had formerly stayed at the camp had already been withdrawn to Buthidaung town.



Location of Htan Shauk Khan and neighbouring villages in relation to MOC 15 and LIB 551

The unfolding of the massacre

Myanmar Army troops enter Htan Shauk Khan

Early in the morning of Thursday May 2nd, a middle-aged farmer from North Htan Shauk Khan said he saw hundreds of Myanmar Army troops coming from the north along the road from the direction of MOC 15. They were carrying backpacks and holding guns. He said about half of the troops went along the road into the LIB 551 base, and half left the road and entered Htan Shauk Khan.

After seeing the Myanmar Army troops, the farmer was fearful that fighting would break out, and gathered his wife and seven children, and left northwards out of the village. He said hundreds of his neighbours were also fleeing in the same direction. Some were walking on the road, some in jeeps or motorized trishaws, and some, like his family, were walking through the fields.

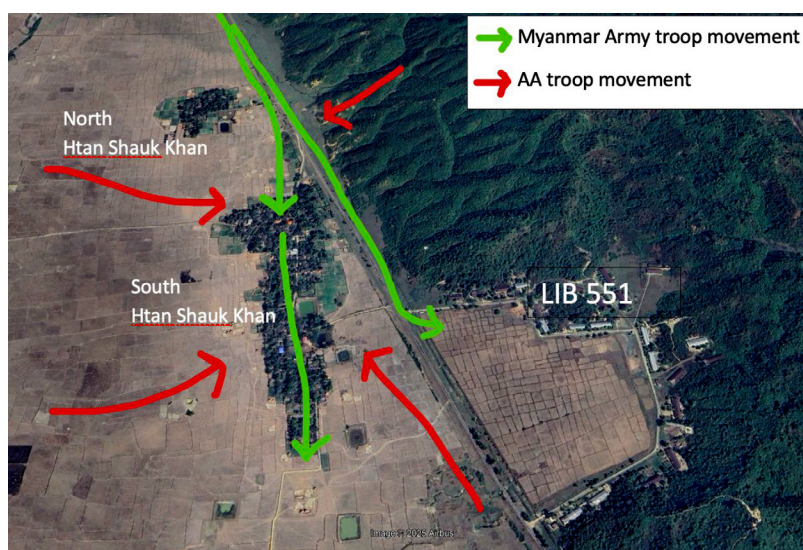
However, after walking for about five minutes, the farmer said that about fifty AA troops suddenly appeared from the hills east of the road and blocked the villagers from fleeing.

Htan Shauk Han villagers ordered out of their homes

At around this time, villagers from South Htan Shauk Khan were being ordered to leave their homes. Some said that AA troops arriving in the village ordered them out of their homes. One, an 18-year-old girl, said the Myanmar Army was directing people with a loudspeaker to leave the village because fighting was going to break out with the AA.

A 30-year-old woman said she heard the order to leave from

a loudspeaker. She said she and her children had only just woken up and didn't have time to get dressed properly. After leaving their house, they were ordered by the AA to come to the main road east of the village and sit there with other villagers. She said there were some Rohingya helping the AA translate into Rohingya. They were told that all villagers had to identify if their sons had been recruited by the Myanmar Army. If they didn't reveal their names, they would all be killed.



Troop movement around Htan Shauk Khan early in the morning of May 2nd, 2024

An elderly woman said there were still some Myanmar Army soldiers hiding in the village when residents were being evacuated. She saw about fifty soldiers hiding among the houses, including some Rohingya recruits. She said she was afraid that fighting would break out with the AA troops who were advancing into the village.

A 19-year-old villager said his family was ordered out of his

home in South Htan Shauk Khan at gunpoint by AA soldiers. They were forced to go out onto the main road east of the village together with hundreds of other villagers. He said that among his group were two Myanmar Army soldiers. They were surrounded by over a hundred AA soldiers. The AA troops told the villagers they would not be hurt, and they should hand over the two Myanmar Army soldiers. The villagers agreed, and brought forward the two soldiers. AA troops then ordered the villagers to disarm the soldiers. The villagers took one automatic rifle and two pistols from the soldiers, and were ordered to throw these to the AA. After this, AA troops arrested the Myanmar Army soldiers and led them away.

Orders to kill

The 19-year-old villager said that after the Myanmar Army troops were handed over, he thought the villagers would be allowed to leave, but instead they were forced to sit down in rows on the road and beside it, with their heads bowed. He was sitting behind his mother, father and five younger brothers and two younger sisters. Suddenly he heard an order from the walkie-talkie being used by an AA soldier overseeing his group: “Ah-lone that pit laik!” (Kill them all!).

After this, the AA troops began shooting at the villagers, using machine guns, rifles and pistols. Some threw hand grenades at the villagers. Some tried to run away, but were caught and killed.

The young man saw all his family members, except one sister, being shot in front of him. He realized it would be dangerous to run away, so took his mother’s blood-soaked scarf and covered himself with it, pretending to be dead. The AA troops came round kicking the bodies to check who was dead, and he played lifeless when kicked.

At that time, a jet plane flew overhead and dropped a bomb, so the AA troops scattered to take shelter. He was then able to run to the nearby hillside and hide behind a tree. He saw the AA troops returning after the jet had left, and kicking the bodies again. Then he saw the AA troops gathering the bodies together in a field beside the road.

A 30-year-old woman who was in the same group of villagers said that her husband, a farmer, her 10-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, were killed by AA gunfire. She too lay down pretending to be dead, with two younger daughters, aged 6 and 8. They managed to crawl away to safety after the AA had left.

Shot at while fleeing

Meanwhile, the farmer fleeing northwards said that shortly after being blocked by the AA, they opened fire on the group of villagers in front of him. He then ran southwards with his family. However, as they were running, AA troops appeared from the hills west of his village, and blocked them, shooting at those trying to run away. He said that six people in his group were hit by gunfire. They were only able to carry and save one of the wounded, a man in his fifties. Those unable to be saved included a 40-year-old woman and her 3-year-old child, who were shot while crossing a stream, and drowned in the water. The farmer's immediate family were luckily all able to reach U Hla Pe village in safety, but he lost 30 of his relatives in the massacre.

A 25-year-old woman said her sister-in-law and her four children were all shot and killed while they were fleeing. Her husband was hit in the eye by shrapnel from a grenade, and has since lost his eyesight.

An 18-year-old girl who had fled northward said that suddenly many AA soldiers appeared, “filling the fields”, and started shooting at them. She said that her parents and three brothers were shot and killed at this time. She then ran southward together with some other villagers through the fields.

The girl’s group ran towards a hillside, but suddenly saw some AA troops on the opposite side of a stream. The AA soldiers ordered the villagers to stop and sit on the ground. When they were sitting, the AA troops shouted at them, one brandishing a stick: “Kala – who has joined the army?”

At that time a jet plane flew overhead, and the AA took them into the hills in the direction of U Hla Pe village.

Burning of houses

While chasing and shooting villagers fleeing from Htan Shauk Khan, AA troops set fire to most of the houses in Htan Shauk Khan village. The 18-year-old girl who managed to escape to U Hla Pe said she could see the houses in Htan Shauk Khan being burned as she was running away.

Villagers who later visited the remains of the village said that the entire northern section of village, including the mosque, was burned down, except for one shop and one toilet building.

In the southern section of the village, only four houses and two mosques were left standing. All other buildings, including one mosque, were burned down.

Forcible detention of Htan Shauk Khan IDPs at U Hla Pe village

Many of the villagers who managed to escape alive from Htan Shauk Khan fled to U Hla Pe village. One group was forcibly escorted there by AA soldiers.

One villager said that when he arrived at U Hla Pe, his group was stopped by four AA soldiers outside the village, and forced to hand over all their valuables and their mobile phones. At that time, two jet planes came overhead, dropping bombs, so the AA took them to shelter in a nearby valley. After keeping them there for four hours, the AA moved them back to U Hla Pe, and gave them water. They were told they could stay with relatives in U Hla Pe, if they had any, and if not they should stay in the village Madrassa. He went with a group of about 200 villagers to the Madrassa.

A 30-year-old woman was among those taken to the Madrassa. She said everyone was ordered to sit down, and the AA asked those who had been trained by the Myanmar Army to raise their hands. She said many men, including her husband, who had been trained at the LIB 551 base, raised their hands and were taken away. She never saw her husband again.

An elderly woman who fled to U Hla Pe said the AA had set up seven outposts around U Hla Pe, each with about 50 soldiers. The displaced villagers were forbidden from leaving the area. They were not provided with any aid, and had to find their own means of survival. Only after about two months, a donation of 13 kg of rice and ½ litre of oil was provided per family.

Disposal of bodies in Htan Shauk Khan

Two days after May 2nd, the AA announced they needed fifty men from U Hla Pe as labourers. A villager from Da Pyu Chaung who was taking refuge in U Hla Pe joined the group, which was taken to Htan Shauk Khan.

The villager said that they were ordered to collect bundles of hay from around the village, and put them about ten meters from four piles of bodies, near the main road at the north-east of the village. He said the piles were about two meters high and five meters wide, and were covered with green tarpaulin.



Skeletal remains at Htan Shauk Khan

Although the piles were covered, it was clear that they contained bodies. There was blood around the piles and there was a strong smell of decay. The villager said he had to cover his mouth and nose with cloth to block out the smell. Even while he was there, one body was carried from a field by the AA soldiers and added to one of the piles.

Several days later, the same villager passed by Htan Shauk Khan while herding cattle, and saw that the piles had all been burned, and mostly only blackened bones remained, but some partially burned bodies were still visible.

Another elderly woman who had escaped from Htan Shauk Khan on May 2nd, said she sneaked back from U Hla Pe at night several days after the massacre to search for her relatives (sixty of whom had been killed on May 2nd). At that time, she saw a pile of bodies under tarpaulin behind a mosque in the northern section of the village. A month later, she went back to the village again, and saw remains of many bodies in a drinking water pond built by a local villager called Buillya in the south of the village. She said that among the bodies were some Myanmar Army soldiers, recognizable from their uniforms.



Skeletal remains at Htan Shauk Khan

Escaping to Bangladesh

All those interviewed had decided to flee to Bangladesh because they were unable to survive inside Buthidaung.

An elderly woman from Htan Shauk Khan said she and 11 other family members had set up a hut in the hills near U Hla Pe village, and survived for a year by collecting wild vegetables and selling them in the market.

All the refugees said they had to obtain written permission, either directly or through an “agent”, from the local AA authorities to leave the area and travel to the Naf River in order to cross over to Bangladesh. One man said he had to pay 1.3 million kyat per adult and 160,000 kyat per child.

A religious teacher said he had to pay 275,000 taka to an AA township officer in Buthidaung for his entire family to leave.

Disturbingly, the same teacher said he was forced to hand over all his personal documents to the AA before being allowed to leave, including his family list, and his land tax payment document -- the only concrete evidence of his origins in Buthidaung.



Refugees fleeing at Naf River

Sexual violence

Several incidents of sexual violence by AA troops were recounted by refugee women who had fled the Htan Shauk Khan massacre.

Women raped and killed while fleeing

A 30-year-old woman from Htan Shauk Khan, who fled with other villagers in the direction of U Hla Pe said they were chased by AA troops, who captured young women and raped and killed them.

She saw one 25-year-old woman “H-”, who was carrying her two young children, being captured by three AA soldiers and pulled into long grass on the hillside. She heard her screaming.

The next day, she went back to search for her missing family members (her husband and 13-year-old daughter were both killed on May 2nd) and saw the dead body of H- lying in the grass. Her lower body was naked, and she had been slit with a knife from the crotch to the stomach, leaving her intestines spilled out. The beheaded bodies of her two sons, aged two and four, were nearby.

She saw bodies of three other women near the same path who had also clearly been raped.

Another young woman from Htan Shauk Khan, returning along the same path two weeks later, said she saw the bodies of four young women who were naked or half naked.

The same woman said her 18-year-old cousin, who was eight months pregnant, was captured by AA soldiers when running north of the village on May 2nd, and was raped and killed.

Women kept as sex slaves in army base

As villagers were fleeing from Htan Shauk Khan on May 2nd, AA troops captured some attractive young women, and took them to stay in the LIB 551 base which had been seized from the Myanmar Army.

Three refugee women from Htan Shauk Khan identified twelve women, aged 15 to 30, who had been captured for this purpose. Eleven of the women were from Htan Shauk Khan, and one was from Roinga Dong, but had been displaced to Htan Shauk Khan in mid-April. Three were married, with young children. Three of the unmarried women were sisters.

These women had been seen being captured by the AA, and later, when other villagers returned secretly to Htan Shauk Khan, they had seen some of them inside the LIB 551 compound washing clothes and cooking.

Rohingya collaborating with the AA had also confirmed to other villagers that the women were being kept as sex slaves by the AA. It was learned that four of the women had already died.

Women raped when returning to Htan Shauk Khan

An 18-year-old girl from Htan Shauk Khan, who lost her parents and six siblings in the massacre, sneaked back to her village from U Hla Pe a few months later with some other villagers. They went at 4 am when it was still dark, but were suddenly shot at by AA soldiers in the village. She managed to run away, but two young women in her group, in their early twenties, were captured by the AA. She could hear them screaming.

She waited at a stream on the way to U Hla Pe for about an hour, but the women did not appear. She then returned to U Hla Pe, and later that morning, the two women returned to U Hla Pe. They had been beaten and raped, with visible bruising.

Women forced to provide sex at AA base near Nyaung Chaung

A refugee woman from Nyaung Chaung in southern Buthidaung (about 20 kilometers south of Buthidaung town) provided further evidence of systematic sexual violence by the Arakan Army. The woman said that while the AA were seizing control of Nyaung Chaung in March 2024, they arrested her husband and son (both of whom were later killed by AA) and also repeatedly took away her 23-year-old unmarried daughter to have sex with soldiers at their mountain camp. She was first taken away by an AA officer one evening, then escorted back home by two AA soldiers at about 10 pm that night. Her mother said she was in pain and very weak, with bite marks on her body and cheeks. She was similarly taken away again twice over the next few days, with the same two soldiers coming to collect her and return her each evening.

The refugee said other attractive girls in the village were also taken to be raped at the local AA camp. One girl was so badly hurt that she collapsed in a haystack in the village after being raped. AA troops then came and dragged her into the road and shot her dead, including in the crotch. Villagers were not allowed by the AA to bury her, so they covered her body with dried grass.

Conclusion

This report provides strong evidence that AA troops deliberately killed hundreds of Rohingya civilians, including men, women and children, in Htan Shauk Khan on May 2nd, 2024, acting on direct orders from their superiors.

Evidence is also provided of systematic sexual violence by AA troops, who have raped and killed Rohingya women with impunity, and have kept them as sex slaves in military bases. We therefore urge the Arakan Army to take responsibility for the crimes committed by its troops, as follows:

Accountability: AA leaders must investigate, punish, and remove commanders and troops responsible for killings, sexual violence, and arbitrary detentions.

Protection of Civilians: Immediately release all detained civilians, end sexual slavery, and take concrete steps to safeguard Rohingya communities.

Credibility & Transparency: Show commitment to justice by enforcing laws AA claims to uphold and establishing independent monitoring to prevent further abuses.



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